An Outline of Catholic Teaching

by Father George D. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Introductory Note

Catholic doctrine is not a series of disjointed statements. It is an organic body of religious truth, in which one dogma cannot rightly be understood save in its relation to the others, a part cannot be denied without rejecting the whole. Hence the utility - perhaps even the necessity - in a series of this character, of a brief outline of the whole of Catholic teaching.

The space at the disposal of the writer does not allow of lengthy explanations; these are to be sought in other volumes of the series. It may well be, therefore, that some of the truths here stated will appear difficult, some of the terms used require elucidation. But it has seemed opportune, even at the risk of some obscurity in matters of detail, to deal in its broad outlines with the whole doctrine of the Church, so that the truths of our faith may appear in their proper perspective, each in its connection with each of the others, as an integral part of an harmonious whole.

Introduction

Man's existence on earth is only for a time. The day will come for each mortal being when he must lay down this temporal existence. Then begins the life for which our earthly sojourn is a period of preparation. Then Eternity begins. Far more important, therefore, is the consideration of the needs of the immortal soul than of the perishable body; and of a life that must cease at the grave. Hence, any book which outlines Catholic teaching and deals with that education which develops the whole man in his life of preparation has for its principal object the fitting him for the life that never ends, and deserves, therefore, the deepest consideration and worthy appreciation.

For a long period among those outside the Church, education meant the training of the mind alone; but the falseness of this definition is becoming more manifest to all. Man was made by God for God. In this short sentence is summed up the whole philosophy of life. Upon that simple sentence must reared the whole system of true education which is the keystone of the arch of human life. The Church of Christ has spread with unswerving fidelity this teaching, which is the basis of Catholic training, and has made it the foundation of our education.

At the very dawn of reason, in the earliest years of infancy, the Catholic child is taught the presence of God by signs and symbols which appeal to infant fancy. As soon as the little lips can frame a sentence, they are taught to lisp the first divine article of faith, "I believe in God." As the little mind develops, the mother familiarizes it with the thought of the presence of God, and the moral consciousness is soon aroused, making the invisible and omnipotent Father of all humanity as much an actuality as the child's own Father. The child soon begins to develop reason by reading, and he commences the long years of school life. From hour to hour short prayers recall the thought of God's presence. From day to day he beholds before his eyes the signs of God's love and solicitude, and witnesses the attention and sacrifice of teachers who have offered their lives for the cultivation and spread of true education. From year to year, as he passes from the door of the lower schools to the

portals of higher education, the lessons of God's divine law and God's relations with His creatures are spoken to him with a greater authority and proven by a deeper reasoning.

Then he stands at the threshold of active life and realizes that, though his elementary training is over, greater lessons must now be learned by a thorough application of the principles he has learned. Through it all he must listen to the infallible authority of God and through it all he must heed the voice of his conscience. From the cradle to the grave he is never left without a guide and a friend - a guide, to direct him in the way of right action in all the intricate relations of human life, and a friend, who, in moments of weakness, lends him courage and strength, not by fanciful theory or vague speculation, but by positive, active and definite teaching, counsel and assistance.

This is an outline of Catholic teaching in the main - an outline which the "Treasury of the Faith Series" will, I am sure, develop clearly and interestingly - an outline which well deserves a place in our world today, and merits a closer study by those within the fold, and the sincere attention of those without the pale of the Church.

We trust that the "Treasury of the Faith Series" will meet with the widest possible appreciation and we recommend it most earnestly to the Catholic public and to all those desiring to know the truth.

- *William Cardinal O'Connell*
- *Archbishop of Boston, Massachusetts*

The Divine Trinity

When we were baptised three august names were pronounced over us - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost - and in the name of these three we were made children of God. At the beginning and the end of every day, before and after meals, whenever we enter or leave a church, whenever we make the sign of the Cross, these same three names are on our lips. When, finally, we breathe our last, it is in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost that the Church will speed us on our journey to eternal life.

Who are these three Persons, with whom the whole Christian life is so intimately and essentially connected? They are the one God whom we worship. Who is the Father? He is God, who from eternity begets the Son. And the Son? He is God, eternally begotten of the Father. And the Holy Ghost? He is God, the Spirit from eternity breathed by Father and Son. They are really three, really distinct; distinct, because the begetter is not the begotten, the breather is not the Spirit breathed; distinct by their reciprocal relations, and yet in nature, in Godhead ineffably one. One in nature, not as you and I are one, united by the bond of our common human species, under which we are classified together as individuals. Your human nature is not mine, nor is mine yours, and therefore we are not one man, but two. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one God, because the divine nature which the Holy Ghost eternally receives from Father and Son, which Son eternally receives from Father, is numerically one and the same. One Person is not greater than another, one is not before another; all three are equal and coeternal. Seek no perfection in the Father which is not equally in the Son, no perfection in these which is not in their Holy Spirit; their perfection is their Godhead, which is identical in each. They are distinct really, but merely, by their reciprocal relations. Think of no time in which Father was without his Son, or Father and Son without their Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Spirit are the one God, without beginning or end, changeless, eternal.

And of this Godhead, one in three Persons, what can we say? "We shall say much, and yet shall want words: but the sum of our words is: He is all." (Eccles 43:29) By what name shall we call him? He has

told us his name. He is Being. "I am who am." (Exodus 3:14) He is all perfection, limitless, infinite. Read upon the face of the universe which he has made, and there you may see some reflection of the Maker. ‘The sun that rises and sets, the trees that with the change of the seasons pass from death to life, and from life to death, the animals that are born to die, man himself, "who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow and never continueth in the same state," (Job 14:2) all speak the same language, all say that they are made, that they have received their being from another, that they were not, and now are, that they owe their being to him who is not made, but makes all that is, who receives being from none, whose essence it is to be, who is the necessary Being, God.

Whatever is good and beautiful in the work of his hands, that you may say of him, provided you do not limit or disfigure his perfection. He is not material; for a body has parts, a body changes and tends to dissolution. God is supremely one and simple; he is a Spirit. In him is no transition from one state of being to another, no lack of anything, no capacity unfulfilled; he is changeless. But, for God, to be without movement is not to be quiescent, inactive. To act is his very being; he is essentially active. But his acts do not succeed one another; he has no beginning and no end. What he is and does, he is and does outside of time; for him there is no "before" and "after," but one all-embracing "now." The creatures and their activities which succeed each other in time to him are ever present. God is eternal. And where is God? He is everywhere. To all things that are, God is present, because he is the cause of their being. And yet the universe cannot contain him; his power, infinite as all his perfections, extends immeasurably beyond the limits of the things that he has made. "If heaven," cries Solomon, (3 Kings 8:27) "and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!"

The fount of life is himself most perfectly and infinitely living. But the life of God is not, like ours, dependent on external objects. We cannot live without some material upon which to nourish our vital activity. The divine life is infinitely self-contained, supremely immanent. His life is the life of Spirit, of mind and will. God is subsistent, essential mind, and the object of his contemplation is

himself. He is immediately and immutably conscious of the infinite perfection of his being. There is nothing that gives him knowledge, for his being is the all-sufficient reason of his mental activity, the adequate object of his thought. Of the creatures that he has made he has most perfect and intimate knowledge, but he knows them in knowing himself, the First Cause of all being. Nothing is hidden from his all-seeing eye, which with one eternal glance comprehends in the Source of all being everything that in any way is; has been, can or will be. The thoughts and intentions of man, so jealously hidden from others, lie open before God, who knows what is in man; the future holds no mysteries for him to whom all things are present; not a leaf falls, not a seed shoots; not an atom changes, but with the knowledge of him who is the Cause of all.

To know the good is to love it. God is subsistent Will, and the necessary, all-sufficient object of that will is himself. In God, to will, to love is not to desire, for he lacks nothing that is good. In him is only joy and delight; he is infinitely happy in the contemplation of his goodness. As his mind needs nothing to give him knowledge, so his will needs no other being upon which to lavish his infinite love; he alone is truly and totally self-sufficient. Creatures have their being, creatures have their goodness and their beauty; but they have it from him who is Being, who is Goodness, who is Beauty. It is not because they are that God knows them, not because they are good that God loves them. God knows them, and his knowledge creates them; he loves them, and his love, freely bestowed, gives them some faint reflection of his infinite goodness.

These truths concerning the nature of God are mysterious indeed, and the human mind would be other than it is could it fully understand them, could it ever fathom the depths of the Infinite Being. But, mysterious though they are, man recognises that God must be so, and rejoices in the knowledge which human language is but ill-fitted to express. But of the Trinity of Persons, of that mystery of the life of God, belief in which may be said to be the touchstone of Christianity, man could have known nothing, had God not willed in his mercy to reveal his secret. Where all is simple and indivisible, we should have thought that there is place for nothing but unity. Yet there - wonder of wonders - is a Trinity of Persons. The divine life of mind and will is fruitful, productive, and

the one, eternal God is not one Person, but three. We cannot understand this mystery; but yet, enlightened by faith in God's revelation, we strive to find in our own life of mind and will some analogy by which we may illustrate the adorable life of the Trinity.

God the Son is called the Word; he is "the image of the invisible God," (Colossians 1:15) "the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance." (Hebrews 1:3) Is he not, then, the eternal subsistent thought, the Word conceived by the Father, wherein he perfectly expresses himself, the object of his eternal contemplation? And the Holy Spirit, is he not the subsistent breath of divine love, proceeding eternally from the Father and his Word? We lisp like children when we speak of things divine. But we are destined one day to know the answer. We are called to share in that divine life, in that intercommunication of knowledge and love, which is the life of the Blessed Trinity. Until God's face is openly revealed, we adore by faith in his word.

God and Creatures

Infinitely happy in the contemplation of himself, in the mutual knowledge and love of the three divine Persons, God has no need of anything apart from himself. Nothing, therefore, could constrain him to create, to produce other beings. That act of divine love, whereby he eternally decrees that creatures shall begin to exist, is perfectly and supremely free. By an exercise of his almighty power God willed, commanded, and creatures began to be. There was nothing out of which he might make them - not from his own substance, which is simple and indivisible - and apart from him there was nothing. "He spoke and they were made, he commanded, and they were created." (Psalm 32:9) He cannot increase his perfection, for it is infinite; then he will manifest it. There shall be beings distinct from him, and yet in some manner resembling him, for they will each show forth something of the infinite perfection of their Maker.

That infinite perfection we have tried to contemplate and to describe; but our minds are as impotent to grasp as our language is inadequate to express it - it is as if we tried to gaze upon the noonday sun. Yet look at the western sky when the sun has dipped below the horizon, and see how each tiny cloud portrays a different tint, how the sun's white brilliance is reflected now in a gorgeous variety of colour; it is the glory of the setting sun. The divine perfections, as mirrored, participated in creatures, are the external glory of God. He has freely willed that the supreme perfection which in him is one, simple and undivided, should be reflected in myriads of beings, each having its own goodness and beauty, each manifesting in some degree the goodness and the beauty of its Maker, each dependent entirely upon that Maker for all that it has and is.

The result of that eternal decree is the universe, the finite mirror of God's limitless beauty, the visible pledge of his infinite love. Supreme in the hierarchy of created being are the angels, pure spirits, separated indeed by an abyss from the infinite simplicity of God, to whom they pay homage as their Creator, yet most perfect among creatures because they are pure intelligences, most like to

the great Spirit who is the cause of all. Over these death has no power; matter has no hold. Untrammelled by bodily limitations, their intellect needs no laborious reasoning to arrive at the truth, but reaches it by simple, immanent acts, receiving its knowledge by a mysterious radiance from the eternal Sun of Truth. Their will-activity is proportionately perfect, free and unconstrained, but decisive and irrevocable, with none of the groping hesitancy of our human deliberations. Their name describes their office; they are God's messengers, the ministers of his power, the bearers of his commands. Their life and their joy is to sing in spiritual canticles the praises of their God. (Isaiah 6:1)

Lowest in the scale of being are inorganic material substances; and yet in these what wonderful variety and harmony are discovered by the scientist, what immense, unchartered spaces have been revealed by the astronomer. Such is the awful majesty, the splendour, the beauty of the heavens, so clear is the voice with which they "‘tell forth the glory of God" that many have been led to see there, not the works of his hands, but the Maker himself. "With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods: let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they. For the first author of beauty made all those things." (Wisdom 13:3)

More perfect in their order than these are the innumerable forms of plant-life with which land and sea have been adorned by the unstinting generosity of the Creator. They are living beings; a higher force has entered into matter and formed it into the living cell. Here in its least perfect form is animate existence. The plant assimilates the inorganic matter around it and grows unconsciously, but vitally, to its own perfection, transmitting its life to others of the same species.

Higher still in the scale are the animals, which in addition to the functions of plant-life possess an even more perfect activity. By sensation they perceive their object, and, desiring it, move spontaneously in search of it, in this manner consciously seeking and securing what they need for their growth and propagation.

Finally, at the very centre of the universe, all the perfections of created being meet in the "microcosm," "the little universe," man himself, in whom a body, immeasurably superior in beauty and

proportions to that of the other animals, is vivified by a principle whose essence and activity are unbounded by the limits of matter; man is endowed with a spiritual, immortal soul. In this noble being the perfections of the spiritual and of the material spheres, of the visible and of the invisible worlds, are wonderfully combined. With inanimate material substances he has in common a body; with plants he shares vegetative life, whereby he absorbs nourishment from without for his development and begets others like himself to propagate his species; like other animals, he has the faculties of sense and instinct - but what raises him far above all these is his spiritual soul, whereby he is like the angels.

And yet man is a unity. It is by virtue of the one spiritual principle that he lives and moves, feels and sees, knows and wills. He has not three souls, but one - a spiritual soul, whereby he exercises all his functions, both those which he has in common with other creatures and those which are proper to himself. Like the animals he receives sense-impressions, but with his immaterial intellect he elaborates them, purifies them, disengages them from their material conditions, forms spiritual and universal ideas, and is able by these to rise above matter and to live in the world of the spirit. His feet are upon the earth, but his head soars to the heavens. Dependent in all his vital operations upon material things, he is yet able to lift himself beyond them. He alone of visible creatures has the conception of moral good, of his duty to his Maker; he alone is able to know God, to rise from the contemplation of visible things to the knowledge - imperfect indeed, but how precious! - of the invisible Creator of all.

Side by side with intelligence he has the faculty of free will. Man is not drawn of necessity to embrace any of the finite goods that he apprehends. ‘They are arraigned before the judgement-seat of his intelligence, they are weighed in the balance. Desiring the good, he chooses between the various means that present themselves as conducive to it, and in this choice consists his freedom. He is material, but not wholly so; then he will satisfy his material needs, but only in so far as they assist in his spiritual development. He is spiritual, but not wholly so; then, while attending primarily to his spiritual development, he will not neglect the needs of the body. By his free will man is master in his own house and, for good or for ill,

freely directs his own activities.

"Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him above the works of thy hands." (Psalm 8:6-7) The whole material creation is subject to man. ‘The new splendours, the immense spaces, the overwhelming vastness of the material universe that are being daily revealed to us by science - these may indeed make us exclaim with the Psalmist: "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:5) We may wonder the more at the prodigal generosity of the Creator who has made all these things for man, but none may take from him the glory and the honour with which God has crowned him. It is not for man to abdicate his throne. The vastest planet is as nothing compared to the mind of man that studies its evolutions; the whole of the material universe is less in God's sight than the tiniest child endowed with intelligence, upon whom the light of the Lord's countenance is signed. (cf. Psalm 4:7)

Man is lord of the visible universe; but he is also its priest. For no other reason have all things been subjected to man than that he in turn may offer them to God. God has created all things for himself, since he who is the First Cause, the First Mover, himself unmoved, can have no other motive. If man, the "pontifex," the bridge-builder between matter and spirit, has been crowned with glory, that glory is not his own, but God's; it is to God, then, that he must offer it. "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power; because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and have been created." (Apocalypse 4:11)

The object, then, that creatures are to achieve is the external glory of God; and it is in achieving this object that they achieve their own perfection. All creatures are destined to "serve God"; not that they can give anything to God, from whom they have their very being and all that they possess; but they are to serve God by showing forth in their own finite perfections something of the infinite goodness and beauty of their Maker. In this see how the sublime self-love of God is supremely disinterested. Receiving nothing he gives all; creating all things for his own glory he thereby perfects all creatures. Creatures themselves, in fulfilling the purpose of their existence, which is to manifest the goodness of God, thereby perfect

themselves; for the more perfect they are, the more do they redound to the glory of him who made them.

God, therefore, is not only the beginning, he is the end of all creatures. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God." (Apocalypse 1:8) From God all creatures come, to him all creatures tend. He is the sovereign Good, the first source of all good; in whom, then, if not in the Author of their being, can creatures seek their ultimate perfection? It is this fundamental truth that we express whenever we speak of the "universe": it is "towards one" that all created things, diverse though they are in their nature, varied in their activities, must ever tend, towards him from whom, in whom, and to whom are all things (cf. Romans 11:36) that are made.

That same eternal activity that creates them, that preserves them in being, that co-operates with their every movement, also directs them providentially to their end. The material elements that act and react according to their nature, the heavenly bodies that move unswervingly on their appointed course, the tiny seed that swells in the soil and reaches out roots to absorb nourishment for its growth, the animal that with sure instinct finds the food that it needs, that mates with its similar to propagate its species, that tends and cares for its young - all these are obeying, each according to its respective nature, the law of him who made all things for himself. A creature may suffer loss, but it is for the perfection of a higher; a part may seem to fail, but it is for the good of the whole. In the decree of God's Providence there is no chance. All is according to plan; all is directed to good.

Men and angels too, free agents though they are, are none the less subject to the all-wise Providence of God. That infinite Wisdom, which "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly," (Wisdom 8:10) respects the noble gifts that he has given to intelligent creatures; and the law of nature, which others fulfil unconsciously and of necessity, becomes in them the moral law, recognised by the mind and freely obeyed by the will. Man knows that he can do wrong, but he knows also that he ought to do right. He sees in his duty the obligation, not merely of acting in accordance with the proper aspirations of his nature, but of

submission to the will of his Creator. He knows that he can, if he will; act as though created joys were the ultimate object of his existence, but he knows too that by inordinate indulgence in such pleasures he disobeys the law of him who is his supreme Good, his last End. He can choose between the creature and the Creator; but, whatever his decision, he remains subject to God's law. If with full deliberation he rebels, then he rejects the Sovereign Good, he renounces his own perfection and his happiness which can be found only in the God whom he has spurned. He can rebel but yet he cannot frustrate the plan of God's Providence; for in that eternal decree it is ordained that Justice will punish all who refuse to submit to his merciful and beneficent law.

In God, therefore, consists man's final perfection. Earthly joys, however noble, however spiritual, cannot content the longings of his immortal soul for a good which is all-inclusive, limitless, and indefectible. God alone can satisfy man's infinite desires; in him alone who is self-existent Truth, the measure of all truth, can his mind have complete repose; in him alone, the Sovereign Good, the standard and cause of all good, can his will find peace and full delight.

And how will he attain his End? What destiny awaits him beyond the darkness of the grave? Were we left to rely for our answer solely upon human reasoning, if in order to learn the truth we had as evidence only man's nature as we know it and God's generosity as we can conjecture it, then we might have said that, when death had put an end to the time of probation, when man's body had crumbled in the dust, then the soul, spiritual and immortal, would live on to be delighted with the contemplation of still more perfect creatures, of beings in whom the beauty of their Maker would be more clearly resplendent and, by an indefinite progress through unending life, would continue more and more perfectly - yet never completely - to know and love God in the mirror of his creatures; that the body, too, faithful companion of the soul on her earthly pilgrimage, essential part of man's composite nature, might perhaps be raised by God from corruption to share this unending bliss. . . .

All such conjectures, reasonable though they are, fall far short of the truth. God has dealt more generously with his creatures than

the mind of man could ever have conceived.

The Raising of Creatures to God

While we admire the almighty Power of God which gives being to everything that is, while in the universe, this pageant of beauty, this harmonious blending of every conceivable perfection, we adore his infinite Wisdom, still there is one divine attribute which outshines all others in the works of his hands; it is his infinite Love, his insatiable delight in giving. And yet we have scarcely begun to tell the story of his benefits.

God, in creating, has communicated many and marvellous perfections to his creatures; but the greatest of these is yet infinitely distant from him who is essential goodness. He has created beings who resemble him, for the artist cannot but reproduce something of himself in his work. He has communicated to them a likeness of himself, but he has not communicated himself. Man especially, it is true, is made in the image and likeness of God, for in him are intellect and will whereby he presents some reflection of the spiritual life of God. God lives by knowing and loving himself; man too can know and love God. But what a difference! Man's nature is such that by his natural powers he can never know God immediately and directly; he can know him only in the mirror of his creatures, in the imperfect - necessarily imperfect because created and finite - image of the divine perfections which is the universe that he has made. Intimate though this knowledge might become in that state of natural beatitude at which our reason has conjectured, it must ever remain imperfect, immeasurably inferior to that knowledge whereby God sees himself face to face.

Our knowledge, which is nothing else than a spiritual representation within ourselves of the objects that surround us; must be conditioned by our nature. That nature is compounded of body and spirit; and hence our knowledge of the spiritual world, though true and objective, is necessarily imperfect and inadequate. At the very least our concept of God must be a limited idea, by which we represent singly and separately the infinite perfections which in God are one and undivided. Every finite concept, therefore, whether in men or in angels, must be of an infinitely lower order than God, and for that reason infinitely incapable of

representing God as he is in himself. To know God directly and immediately, to contemplate in all its radiant beauty the Divine Essence, to see all loveliness in its first fount and origin - this is the life of God himself, this is the eternal life of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the life of the Blessed Trinity; and from that life the creature, because he is a creature, is naturally for ever excluded.

Yet it is this divine life that God decreed to communicate to intellectual creatures. The limitations of the creature set no limit to the Creator's delight in giving. The vision of God, which is the essence of the divine activity, is beyond the natural power of any finite being; yet it is to this "supernatural" end that God has destined us. Creatures are to be made "partakers of the divine nature," (2 Peter 1:4) partakers in his life; we are to be made "like to him; because we shall see him as he is," (1 John 3:2) - no longer groping after the light of God in the dim twilight of created beauty, no longer seeing him "through a glass in a dark manner," but "face to face," (1 Corinthians 13:12) bathed for ever in the light of eternal Truth.

This, then, is the ultimate perfection of man, in this will all his faculties receive perfect satisfaction: "'I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." (Psalm 16:15) God the Son, eternally begotten of the Father, image of the invisible God, will be the firstborn of many brethren, for creatures will be made comformable to his image. (Romans 8:29) He, indeed, is the Son of God by nature, true God of true God, while men will be but adopted sons, by God's free will given the right to a heritage which naturally could never be theirs, remaining for ever distinct from God and immeasurably distant from his infinite perfection; but yet they are to be admitted within the sanctuary of the Trinity, within the divine Holy of holies, to partake of the divine vision. They are to be adopted by the Father as brethren of his Son in the love, the charity, the sanctity of the Holy Spirit. It is no longer a likeness of himself that he communicates to creatures; it is his very Self.

But it were a poor generosity on the part of God to destine us to an end which we are quite incapable of attaining, did he not also raise our nature to a proportionate state of perfection. Our nature, while remaining essentially the same, must yet be transfigured,

supernaturalised by gifts which will adapt it for so high and glorious a destiny. Nor is it enough that in the moment of attainment God should elevate our nature; he willed that by our own acts we should merit our reward, that our works should have a real relation and proportion to our supernatural end. All ready in this life we must be "sons of God." Let us see the loving Father at work.

To Adam, the first man, from whom the whole human race was to be descended, God gave, in addition to his natural powers, all those supernatural and preternatural endowments which were to fit him for his noble destiny. To his soul was given "sanctifying grace," a real spiritual quality that raised his nature, transforming it after the likeness of God, giving to it a real participation in the nature of God, enabling him to perform supernatural acts meritorious of his supernatural reward, making him an adopted son of God. He was thereby given a new life, not substituted for, but superimposed upon his natural life. His natural faculties were reinforced, etherealised, so to speak, by the infused virtues, by reason of which his acts took on a new and infinitely higher value, for they were supernatural; they were, if we may say so, the recognised currency with which man might purchase his supernatural end.

An even more wonderful effect of this grace; the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, came to dwell within the soul of man, consecrating it as a temple with a special and sanctifying presence. It is of this mysterious presence that Christ says: "If any man love me . . . my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him." (John 14:23) By grace God dwells in the soul as friend, guest, and lover; already by grace is begun that intimate union between God and the creature which will be consummated in the glory of heaven.

Enlightened by faith to know his supernatural destiny, strengthened by hope to have confidence in God's aid to attain it, his will adhering by charity to God, the sovereign Good, every power of his being elevated and ennobled by the infused moral virtues, man was now no longer merely a servant but a son of God, partaking already of the divine life, capable by his acts of meriting the fulness of his inheritance, when it should please God to call him to his final

reward.

But there is more. The nobler faculties of man have been richly endowed; but what of the body, what of his senses? Will not the demands of his lower self distract him from the thought of his high destiny? His soul is spiritual, but his immediate needs are material; is there not a danger that in satisfying these he may forget those of the spirit? His very spiritual faculties are conditioned by sense; may it not be that his senses take an inordinate part in his life? We are but too familiar with these difficulties, and Saint Paul in a well-known passage (Romans 7:14-25) has given a description of them which will be famous for all time. But in the first father of the human race such difficulties, natural though they are to man, had no place. It is natural to man, composed of matter and spirit, that his body should tend to dissolution; God gave him the privilege of bodily immortality. It is natural to man that he should be subject to pain and sickness; Adam was by God's gift preternaturally immune from them. It is natural to man that there should be conflict between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit; there was no such conflict in Adam, endowed with the gift of "integrity" whereby the surge of passion was quelled. The whole of his nature was thus in perfect equilibrium; his sentient faculties in complete subservience to his mind and will, and these subjected by grace to God.

From the body of Adam God formed Eve the first woman, whom he similarly endowed, to be a worthy helpmeet to the father of mankind. It was then that God instituted and blessed the sacred bond of matrimony, whereby the human race should be propagated. From this pair should be descended a blessed progeny; all men would receive as their birthright the same gratuitous endowments that adorned their first parents - a birthright due, not to the nature of man, but to the lavish generosity of the Creator who, not content with leaving man in his natural state, had willed to raise him to a destiny nothing short of divine. Their life on earth would be a happy one, the future unclouded by the shadow of death, their daily labour a joy and a delight, their leisure spent in sweet and intimate converse with God, until they should be rapt immortal to his eternal embrace.

The Fall of Creatures from God

It might well have seemed that our first parents, in a state of perfection such as has been described, could not have failed to achieve their end, that God in his generosity had given all that was necessary for the fulfilment of his beneficent plan. And, indeed, on God's part nothing was lacking to assure the happy issue. But among the natural prerogatives of man there is one which, while it is his greatest dignity, was also the source of his downfall; man has free will. The whole of his being, in that state of "original justice," was in complete subjection to his will - within himself there could be no rebellion; but his will, adhering indeed to God by grace and charity, had yet lost nothing of its freedom and defectibility. The service that Adam was to render to his Maker was in his power to give or to withhold. Through the wiles of Satan and by the suggestion of his consort he withheld it.

The angels had been raised by God to a destiny identical with that of mankind; they too, after a period of probation, were to enjoy the vision of God. Called upon to recognise the supremacy of their Creator, many of them, led by Lucifer, rebelled. For them there could be no repentance; such is the perfection of the angelic nature that their decision between good and evil, though free and unconstrained, is final and irrevocable. Cast out for ever from God's sight and condemned to a just and eternal punishment, the rebel angels would spend their existence in endeavouring to drag mankind with them in their fall. To others God would entrust the task of protecting men against their crafty machinations. The great drama was about to begin.

The head of the fallen angels approaches the head of the human race - not directly, but through the woman Eve. "Ye shall be as gods." Such is the bait with which he tempts her. And Eve first, and then her consort, deceived by the glamour of an impossible independence, rebel against the supreme authority of their Creator - they sin. This was the first in that long series of revolts which has continued through the ages, whereby to God, his last End and Supreme Good, man prefers the finite, created good which is himself, whereby the creature sets himself in the place of the

Creator. In this consists the awful malice of sin, that the sinner, weighing up in his mind the comparative merits of the creature and of the Creator, decides in favour of himself. Sin, in the words of Saint Augustine, is "the love of self to the contempt of God."

With one act of disobedience, prompted by pride, our first parents wrecked that edifice of supernatural beauty and harmony which the loving hand of their Father had built. Charity departed from their souls, for how could they love God above all things when they loved themselves in his despite? With charity were lost grace and the noble array of infused moral virtues; lost, in fact, were all the supernatural gifts with which they had been endowed to achieve their destiny; they had ceased to be the sons of God. The Trinity withdrew its holy presence from that desecrated temple, from the souls in which they were dishonoured guests.

And now, with the rebellion of the spirit against God, there began at once in man the insubordination of flesh to spirit. The preternatural gifts given to our first parents in order that without difficulty and distraction they might devote the whole of their energies to the loving service of God - these gifts were now withdrawn, for they had ceased to serve their purpose. They began to feel the weaknesses inherent in human nature. Those inordinate desires that come to us unbidden, those tendencies that seem to carry us away before we can advert to their presence, those base cravings that draw us to evil and hardly suffer control, the importunate stings of concupiscence that give no peace till we assent to them - of all this they tasted the first bitter experience after their sin. Unruly passion, held hitherto in check by the gift of integrity, reared itself unrestrained; the mind, hitherto clear and serene, became clouded with uncertainty and error; the daily toil that had been man's pleasure now became a painful task; the natural forces that make for the dissolution of the human body were now allowed full sway, and man's life became the path to the tomb towards which he wends his way, reminded daily of his mortality by the stimulus of pain and disease. All these are natural defects, but man had not been intended to experience them; the purely gratuitous endowments which had obviated them had been lost through man's sin; they are natural, and yet also the penalty of rebellion.

But lamentable and painful as were these natural infirmities, they were as nothing compared with the loss of supernatural grace. In this was the great tragedy, in this essentially consisted the state of sin. With the loss of grace man was in a state of enmity with God. Destined for an end far in excess of his natural powers, he remained deprived of all supernatural gifts, totally incapable of attaining the object of his existence. His nature remained in its essentials intact, but, compared to that former state, what a ruin! Seek as he might to serve God in future with his natural powers, his acts could have no proportion to the exalted destiny of the sons of God; repent as he might with bitter tears to atone for his offence against God, no act of his could make reparation for that insult to God's infinite majesty. Man was now a purposeless thing, like a rudderless, dismasted ship at the mercy of wind and waves, bound for a port which she has no conceivable hope of reaching.

The first sin of Adam, tragic in its consequences for him, is tremendous in its effects upon us; for his sin is our sin too. All men who are naturally born receive their nature from Adam, the fountain-head of the human race; and together with that nature they inherit his sin. We cannot inherit his wilfulness, we cannot inherit his responsibility, but we inherit the state of sin which he induced by his sinful act.

God had designed that the natural means which he had instituted for the propagation of the human race should fill the earth with men, who, from the first moment of their existence, would be endowed with grace and integrity; they were to be born men, yet immortal sons of God. The supernatural and preternatural gifts which we have described were to be attached to man's nature as a specific human property, so that to be a man would involve - by God's bounty - being also the adopted son of God. Of all these precious gifts Adam, by his sin, despoiled his nature, and in that state of privation he transmitted it to us. We have lost nothing of the essentials of our nature; we have lost super-added privileges. But the absence of grace means a state of sin, a state of enmity with God. For man, destined to a supernatural end, constituted from the beginning in the state of "original justice," to be without that supernatural rectitude which should be his normal condition, is to be in the state of "original sin."

If all men must die, it is because Adam, by his sin, forfeited for himself and for us the gift of bodily immortality; if man is condemned to a painful and laborious existence, if in his search after truth he is hampered by error and discouraged by ignorance, if his will is in conflict with inordinate desires, if, with Saint Paul, (Romans 7:23-25) he sees another law in his members fighting against the law of his mind, if "concupiscence," child and father of sin, (cf. ibid. and James 1:14-15) is the lot of all men in their daily lives - all this is due to that first sin which brought death and sorrow to mankind. "Unhappy man that I am," cries Saint Paul, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer comes as a joyous echo: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Plan and Preparation of Redemption

If the limitations of the creature could set no bounds to the generosity of God, neither could the malice of the sinner baulk the designs of his mercy. Man had sinned, he had stripped himself of the precious garment of grace with which the loving hand of God had clad him; he was an outcast on the face of the earth, shut out from the intimacy to which God had willed to admit him, the enemy of God who had loaded him with benefits. The glory of God's love has appeared in his lavish gifts; we have seen his wisdom and his power in the works of his hands. Surely the moment had come in which he would manifest the perfection of his justice by casting man out for ever from his sight?

His justice, indeed, will appear, but infinite mercy will attend it. The condemnation of man is accompanied by the promise of salvation; the sentence of death is mitigated with the promise of life. As the man and the woman stood trembling before God's offended majesty, they heard that there would come another man and another woman who should undo the work of the triumphant demon; a woman and her seed should crush the serpent's head. Sin, far from thwarting God's beneficent design, will be the occasion of a still greater manifestation of his goodness. Out of the darkness of sin shines forth the bright figure of the Redeemer.

The sin of Adam was disastrous, whether we consider man in himself, or in his relation to God. In man himself it meant the loss of all that made possible the attainment of the supernatural end to which he was destined. That loss, as far as man was concerned, was irreparable; he could do nothing by his own act to merit its restitution, for the very quality which could make his acts meritorious was the gift of supernatural grace which he had lost. What was his condition in the sight of God? He had offended God; he had withheld from him the honour that was his due; he had preferred the creature to the Creator. The insult, the offence was in a manner infinite, infinite as the majesty of God against whom it was committed. He had offered an insult for which he was powerless to make adequate satisfaction; for if the gravity of an offence is to be measured by the dignity of the person offended, the

value of the honour paid in compensation is proportionate to the worthiness of the offerer. Man could commit an "infinite" offence; he could not make infinite atonement. Nothing could make condign satisfaction for sin save an infinite act of adoration, and that no creature could offer.

To repair this twofold ruin; to restore to man the gifts that he had lost, to make condign satisfaction to God for the offence committed against him; this is the work of "Redemption."

But might not God have waived his right to satisfaction, and have condoned man's offence? Might he not have accepted the poor satisfaction that man himself could contrive to offer by his tears and lamentations? Might he not have reinstated man immediately in his supernatural dignity, treating him as if he had never sinned? To our puny human minds there seems to be nothing in such suggestions incompatible with the perfections of God. But to no human mind could it ever have occurred to conceive the plan by which Redemption was actually to be accomplished; it was such as only an infinite wisdom could devise. In this plan, infinite justice is satisfied, infinite mercy is displayed, God's power, his wisdom and his love find most perfect and marvellous expression. Let us glance at it now.

Divine justice demanded adequate satisfaction such as no finite being could make; none but God can give infinite honour to God. Then God himself, the second Person of the most Holy Trinity, will become man in order to give it. Man, he will offer prayer, adoration and sacrifice to God, and because he is also God his offering will be of infinite value. By his sacrifice he will appease divine justice, he will merit for man the grace that he has lost. He, the Son of God, will be the second Adam. Through the first came death, through the second will come life. All mankind born of Adam are born to sin by virtue of their solidarity with him; all who are reborn in Christ, by reason of their mystical «inion with him, will be reborn to grace. From the Son of God made man, as from a ‘fruitful vine into its branches, will flow into all men united with him the grace that makes them once more the sons of God and heirs of eternal life. Man had cast away his birthright as son of God; God the Father will not spare his own Son that his adopted sons may be restored to

their inheritance. God will become man in order that man may be restored to his share in the nature of God. Can we be surprised that the Church, celebrating this wonder of God's mercy and goodness, this mystery in which "mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed," (Psalm 84:11) does not hesitate to cry: "*O felix culpa!*" "O happy sin that gave us so noble a Redeemer!"

No sooner is the promise made than the salutary work of Redemption is begun. He, the Redeemer, will not come until the time appointed for his advent, but already the Sun of Justice has appeared above the horizon, already he is present in the expectation of men, and through faith in the Saviour to come they are sanctified by his grace. First to profit by the fruits of the Redemption were our parents, who by their sin had rendered it necessary. But to them, now, as to all men henceforth, grace was given as a personal gift, and not as a legacy which they might transmit to their children. It is no longer by carnal generation from the first Adam, but by spiritual regeneration in Christ that men will be made the sons of God.

The promise made to Adam and Eve, handed on by them to their children, is treasured through the ages, and with the dispersion of men over the face of the earth the Redeemer becomes "the expectation of nations." (Genesis 49:10) The fall of our first parents was followed by a gradual moral and physical degradation of the human race; sin took its toll of the spiritual and bodily health of mankind, and the hope that had shone so brightly in the earliest times became neglected and obscured. But nowhere, even among those nations in which error and vice especially prevailed, was that primitive revelation entirely lost. In the chosen people, the race of whom the Redeemer himself was to be born, the hope of a coming Saviour remained ever green; in them, in spite of their inconstancy and repeated delinquencies, God kept alive the faith in him who was to bring salvation to mankind. Their heroes are types of the coming Redeemer; their religious hymns are filled with inspired references to the Messias; their religious rites, their sacrifices are types to foreshadow his great sacrifice which should redeem the world.

Why was his coming delayed? God was awaiting the fulness of time,

until men had learned by long and bitter experience how weak their nature is, until the pride that had given birth to Adam's sin should be humbled in the dust, so that men might cry out for a Saviour; the world must be prepared to receive the Son of God made man.

As time goes on, the expectation becomes more and more clearly defined. The Holy Ghost, speaking through inspired writers and prophets, announces that the Redeemer will be of the seed of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob; he will be the son of David. With Isaias and Jeremias the prophecies becomes still more detailed regarding the origin and the life of the Redeemer to come. Every woman of Israel had cherished the hope that she might be his mother. Isaias announces the providential decree that he will be born of a virgin: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (God with us)." (Isaiah 7:14) "A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace . . . he shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it and strengthen it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth and for ever." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

And now, when the fulness of time was come, the grace of the Redeemer, whose merits are ever present in the sight of God, that grace which had sanctified the souls of all men of good will since the fall of Adam, was poured out in the greatest abundance upon her whom God had eternally chosen as the Mother of the Redeemer. The woman whose seed was to crush the serpent's head, the woman between whom and Satan there was to be complete enmity, the second Eve, who by her co-operation with her Son the second Adam was to repair the ruin brought about by our first parents - this was Mary. She alone (Christ, since his body was miraculously formed in the womb of his Virgin Mother, is not a child of Adam in the sense in which we are, and was therefore not subject to the law of sin.) of all the children of Adam was preserved immune, through the merits of her Son, from the stain of original sin. She, who with her Son was to overcome Satan, should not for one moment be subject to his dominion. Mary was to be the Mother of the Redeemer; it was fitting that she should be most perfectly redeemed. She was to be the Mother of God; it was right that she should ever have been a

child of God. She was to be the Mother of the spotless Lamb; it was just that she should be spotless, untouched with the slightest stain of original or of actual sin. The first Eve had been formed pure and holy from a pure and sinless Adam; the second Adam should take his immaculate flesh from an ever-immaculate Mother.

The world was ready for his coming, the pure womb that was to bear him was prepared. The great and awful event awaited by men since the moment of that first promise may be worthily recorded only in the inspired word of God: "Behold" (says the Angel Gabriel to Mary), "thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:31-32,35)

Centuries before, a malignant angel had come to a woman upon an errand of death, and the woman's disobedience to God's command which had ensued was the beginning of the sin of the world. The Archangel Gabriel came to Mary with the message of eternal life, and the ready obedience of the second Eve gave us him who is the fount of all grace. Mary, who had designed to know no man, had been troubled at the announcement of the angel that she should conceive and bear a son. Her fear was groundless; the Holy Ghost was to be her Spouse, and Mary, still clad in the white veil of virginity, was yet to wear the crown of motherhood. "And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." The obedient submission of Mary gave to the world the divine Redeemer. In that moment "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

The Redeemer

By creating God communicates an image of himself. By raising creatures to the supernatural order he gives himself, his own infinite beauty and perfection, to be the object of their supernatural knowledge and love, that they may see and love him as he is; he makes the creature a partaker in his own intimate life.

To create was an act of disinterested love; to raise creatures to the condition of adopted sons was infinite liberality, beyond anything that man could have conceived, beyond any legitimate yearning of his nature. Made in God's image and likeness, man had been crowned with glory; made a son of God, he had received a greater glory still. And yet God's love - it seems incredible - had a more wonderful gift in store. Not content with the intimate embrace of man's knowledge and love, he has deigned to become personally one with him, so that there is one divine Person who is both God and man. The Incarnation is the culmination of man's glory, the supreme act of God's love. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," says Saint Paul, (1 Corinthians 2:7) "a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." More than this - we have the authority of God's own word - he could not give. "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

"The Word was made flesh." ‘The second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, God the Son, became man. Has God, then, ceased to be God? Impossible; for the changeless cannot change. Eternally and immutably God, he began at 2 moment of time to be man also. Becoming man, he lost nothing of his Divinity. Nor yet did he become richer by assuming humanity. Just as by creation nothing was added to God's infinite perfection, so God incarnate is not more perfect by reason of his manhood. When God creates it is the creature that is perfected. When God assumed a complete individual human nature, a body formed by the power of the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary, a soul created and infused into it by the same divine power, he conferred an unspeakable dignity upon that humanity, because it began to exist, not as a human

person, but as the human nature of God the Son; but God himself remains unchanged.

The Person of Jesus Christ, then, is one: the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In him subsist two natures, really distinct: the Divinity, uncreated, eternal, almighty; and a human nature, created, temporal, mortal, passible. Of Christ we may say with equal truth that he is God and that he is man, that he is eternal and that he died, that he is our Creator and that he redeemed us with his blood. He who is eternally begotten of the Father is the same Person who was born at Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. The Son of Mary is God; Mary is the Mother of God.

Jesus Christ is God, and we adore him. We adore the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and from our worship we exclude nothing of what is personally united to him. We adore his humanity, not because it is human, nor yet because it is perfect, but because it is his; we adore his sacred body and soul because they are the body and soul of the Word made flesh We adore his Sacred Heart because it is the human heart of God incarnate, because with every beat it speaks of the infinite love of God for mankind. We adore Christ because he is God, and adoring we revere all that belongs to his Person.

If the Word is man without prejudice to his Divinity, the man Jesus Christ is also God without detriment to his true humanity. The two natures, ineffably united in the one divine Person, remain distinct and physically unaffected by each other. That sacred body, formed from the virgin flesh of his blessed Mother, is a true human body similar to ours. The tiny fingers that clutched at Mary's hand were alive with the sense of touch; ears, eyes, and the rest functioned as our organs function. In him, as in us, shines the light of intelligence, and he acquired knowledge by the same means as we. He willed, even as we do, and his will is free. Human feelings, human affections and sentiments of joy and sorrow, human desires, all the natural yearnings of man were in him, for all these are good and pertain to the perfection of our nature.

His humanity, then, in all essential respects is the replica of our own. But words fail when we attempt to describe its perfection. "We saw his glory," says Saint John, "the glory as it were of the only-

begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Full of truth because that human intelligence is the mind of God made man. The man Jesus Christ is humanly conscious from the first moment of his human life that he is God, and from that first moment with his human mind he contemplates the Godhead face to face. Not for one instant, even while his soul was sorrowful unto death, even during the awful desolation of Calvary, was the glorious light of God's countenance withdrawn from his human understanding. During the whole of his life on earth he enjoyed the beatific Vision, and in that Vision all his pain and sorrow - and these were greater than man can tell - appeared to him no longer as an evil, but as God's justice to be appeased, his infinite love to be manifested, his glory to be consummated by the salvation of human souls. In all his agony his soul rejoiced.

He is full of truth because he is the Word of God, Truth itself, who is come to bring truth to mankind; he is "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (John 1:9) He speaks what he knows, he testifies what he has seen; (John 3:11) his doctrine is the doctrine of the Father who has sent him. (John 8:26-28) He alone has seen the Father, for he is in his bosom; he alone has revealed him to mankind. (John 1:18) He is full of truth because as man he is the Judge to whom all judgement has been committed by the Father; (John 5:12) he reads the heart, he knows what is in man, (John 2:25) and will judge every man according to his works.

Jesus Christ, full of truth, is also full of grace. We, by grace, are the adopted sons of God. He is not the adopted son, for he is the Son eternally begotten of the Father; the grace that is abundantly in him is his birthright as God's own Son. It is from him that all men receive grace; and the fount of grace is itself overflowing. (John 1:16) If Saint Augustine, speaking of the holiness of Mary, refused to have the word "sin" even mentioned in her regard, how much more is a like silence imposed when we revere the sanctity of the God-man! The human mind that contemplated the beauty of the Godhead could find no good in the creature save what was ordained to God's glory; his human will, while supremely free, is yet infallibly and completely subject by grace and charity to the will of God, so that the two wills in him, the human and the divine, may,

in a sense, be said to be one. The Holy One of God experienced, as we have said, all the affections, all the yearnings of man's nature, but he was never swayed by these; he was subject to them only in so far as his perfect will allowed.

He, indeed, is the Model of manhood, in whom every virtue after which we so laboriously strive is found in the highest degree of supernatural perfection. Let us pause in our summary description to admire the all-wise and loving Providence of the Father who, having destined men to be his adopted sons after the likeness of his own divine Son, in the charity and communication of the Holy Spirit, has willed to send that Son in human flesh, that in him, our brother - doubly our brother now, because a man like ourselves - we might see and copy in our lives what God desires that his human sons should be.

Dearer, perhaps, to our hearts, because they are our own familiar experience, are the human limitations of the Saviour; for as the truth of his Divinity is no bar to the reality of his manhood, so the perfections of that manhood do not exclude human infirmities. Some of these, natural to man, yet also the penalty of sin, are so closely allied to sin itself that they could find no place in him who is full of grace and truth. Thus disordered desire or "concupiscence" could not be in him, for his will held full sway over all his natural feelings, over every movement of his being; in him flesh was completely subject to spirit. Christ is "full of truth"; no error, no ignorance clouded the human mind of the Light of the world.

But to all the other penalties of the sin of our first parents he willed to be subject. He who came "to take away the sin of the world" assumed them to make use of them for our sake. They are the consequence of sin; it is by their means that sin will be destroyed. Manual toil is consecrated, for he worked with his hands at the carpenter's bench. The poor are blessed, for poverty was his lot who possessed all the riches of the Godhead. He suffered hunger and thirst, and had no place to lay his head. He suffered mental anguish beyond what we are able to appreciate, because we cannot fully understand the perfection of his mind and will, a perfection which must have increased his every suffering. What must the sight of sin have been to the Holy One of God! Nor was his suffering mitigated,

as is ours so mercifully, by the limitations of his knowledge; the sorrows of the past - and still worse, those to come - were ever present to his mind. Of the bodily pain which he suffered during his Passion we need not speak - it is so often the subject of our meditations; suffice it to say that the exquisite sensibility of that soul must have added a refinement to every torture. Last of all, he willed to suffer death. He who was without sin, the immaculate Lamb of God, willed to suffer the penalty of sin for our sake; in the vivid words of Saint Paul: ""Him that knew no sin, for us he hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in him." (1 Corinthians 5:21)

The deep significance of the human limitations of Jesus cannot be better described than in the inspired words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death - that is to say, the devil. . . . Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:14-18)

One other aspect of the humanity of Christ we must yet consider before we can understand the function and the work of the divine Redeemer; it is his miraculous power. The human nature of Christ is the instrument - joined with the Godhead in unity of Person - whereby God gives grace to man and works those miracles which are at once the sign of his divine mission and the necessary means for the accomplishment of the Redemption. God, it is clear, is the sole source of the divine life; he alone can be the first and principal cause of grace. He alone, too, can neutralise by an exercise of almighty power the forces of nature of which he is the Author; miracles can have only God for their principal cause. Yet this power resides in the human nature of the Word Incarnate; it is there, communicated from the Godhead, and used by Christ at will. It is the man Christ who forgives sins by the power of the Divinity which is personally one with him. That same divine power, working through his human nature, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind,

commanded the winds and the sea so that they obeyed him. By the same power our divine Saviour, as he hung bleeding upon the Cross, brought at length to the utmost limit of human endurance, his body reduced to that state of feebleness in which the soul could no longer naturally animate it, was yet able, had he so willed, to retain his life. Freely he laid it down, as freely as after three days he took it up again. (John 10:18)

These acts of our Saviour are human, and yet they are divine. They are human because they proceed from a human nature; they are divine by reason of the power that pervades them. Indeed, not only those actions of Christ which are the vehicles of God's miraculous power, but every act of the Word Incarnate is in a sense theandric, human and divine: human by reason of his human nature, divine by reason of the Person in whom that humanity subsists. They are the human actions of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity; human and yet of infinite dignity, infinite as the dignity of God who performs them.

Christ, therefore, is truly and perfectly God, truly and perfectly man. He is man without losing anything of his Divinity, God without prejudice to his humanity. While the manhood assumed by God the Son is as perfect as manhood can be, yet Christ did not disdain to be subject to the weaknesses of our nature. Finally, side by side with the natural and supernatural perfections of his manhood, in which he presents himself as our Model, we discern others - his extraordinary knowledge and his miraculous power - which are bound up with the peculiar condition of one who is both God and man; and with his functions of Teacher and Redeemer of mankind.

From this necessarily brief description of the adorable Person of our Redeemer, it will be seen that no name more aptly describes him than that of "Mediator." ‘One is the mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) By reason of his twofold nature the God-man is the natural Mediator between God and man, uniting as he does the Divinity and humanity in his own Person. He is the corner-stone who has made both one. With this thought in mind let us study the work of the Redeemer.

The Work of the Redeemer

As the Person of the Word Incarnate may be best described by saying that he is the natural Mediator between God and man, so also it is under the general office of Mediator that his functions in man's regard may most conveniently be grouped.

1

The primitive revelation of divine truth which had been made to man through our first parents had been obscured by sin and error and in great part lost. God had, indeed, brought man once more to some knowledge of himself by a gradual manifestation to the chosen people. But the fulness of revelation came with Christ. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1-2) "He is the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (John 1:9) Christ is Prophet and Teacher.

It is no mere human prophet who teaches us; it is the Word himself, the personal Image of the Father, who comes to bring divine revelation. And what is the doctrine that he came to teach? He came to reveal that Trinity of Persons whose divine life we are destined to share. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18) He revealed the Father, not only as his own Father by nature, but as the Father of us his adopted sons. He revealed his Holy Spirit, not only as the Spirit proceeding from Father and Son, but as the Spirit by whom, if we possess him, we are made the adopted sons of the Father, (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6) made comformable to the likeness of the Son, (Romans 8:29) filled with the supernatural love of God, which by that Spirit is poured forth in our hearts; (Romans 5:5) as the Spirit in whom we are reborn to the divine life of grace. (John 3:5)

The three divine Persons working - nay, dwelling - in the souls of men and raising them to a participation in their divine life - this is the compendium of Christianity. The whole teaching of which I am

endeavouring in this book to give some account is nothing else than the story of how man once received, then rejected, and finally, through the Incarnation of the Son of God, received once more those great and precious gifts by which he is made partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) To recognise this truth, that we by grace are made the adoptive sons of the Father, this is "eternal life." The Word of God, who alone has the words of eternal life, (John 6:69) has said it: "This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

But it is not merely a speculative doctrine that Christ teaches us. He is not only the Truth, he is also the Way and the Life. If he teaches us that we have been raised to the dignity of sons of God, it is in order that we may live worthily of so high a vocation. Raised by grace to this noble destiny, man must achieve his salvation by his own works. The love of God that Christ demands of us is a practical love, a love which is shown by our observance of his commandments. He came not to destroy the moral code which had been given under the Old Testament, but to fulfil it, that is, to perfect it, to render it more detailed and more exacting. The standard of perfection at which Christ asks his disciples to aim is nothing short of divine: "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) And lest we should despair, lest we should think that such perfection could not be found in man, he shows us, by the example of his own life, what the life of a son of God should be. He is the model of every virtue, and he points to himself as the example which all Christians are to follow.

When we consider the authority with which he spoke, the unwavering certainty - so far removed from the hesitancy of human teachers - which characterised his utterance, the simple yet sublime language in which he solves those problems which had ever exercised the human mind - deep problems concerning the origin, the nature, and the destiny of man - when we see that his doctrine is signed and sealed with the divine approbation through the working of miracles, when, finally, we contemplate the grandeur and the harmony of that doctrine itself, then we can well understand how the Samaritans could say, "We ourselves have heard him and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world," (John 4:42) and the exclamation of those who had witnessed his

wonderful works: "A great Prophet is risen up amongst us, and God has visited his people." (Luke 7:16)

2

But it is in the work of redemption strictly so called that the office of the Mediator is especially apparent. The doctrine that Christ taught, even the example of his life, might conceivably have been given to mankind by purely human agency. God might have used a man specially inspired, as were the prophets of old, as the bearer of his revelation. But the divine plan of Redemption, such as we have briefly described it above, could be fulfilled by no other than the God-man.

We have seen that Redemption involves two elements: that of satisfaction, whereby adequate atonement should be made for man's offence; and that of merit, whereby grace, which man had lost by sin, should be restored to him. Now such satisfaction, such merit, is completely beyond the power of a mere man. The atonement offered by a creature could have no proportion with the magnitude of an offence against God's infinite majesty. And how could man merit grace, when the very grace which he lacked was necessary that his acts might be meritorious? Only the Godman could offer infinite satisfaction; only the God-man, who, as the only-begotten of the Father, is full of grace by right of his divine Sonship, could gain merit sufficient, and more than sufficient, for the whole human race.

Only the God-man could redeem us. But it is clear from what we have said of the adorable Person of our Redeemer that his merest act would have sufficed. Every human act of Christ during his life on earth was the act of a created, finite nature, and as such, could be, and was, an act of homage to God the Creator of all. But each of those acts was also, as we have seen, the act of God; for the Person of Christ is one, the second Person of the most Holy Trinity. It is God who is born of the Virgin Mary, God who is subject to his human parents at Nazareth, who preaches divine truth in human words, is rejected, suffers, and dies upon the Cross. Each of these acts, therefore; is human and yet, because it is the act of a divine Person, is of infinite; divine value. A sigh, a tear of the divine Child would have been sufficient to redeem the world. But the infinite

Love of God - we have seen it again and again - is not content with what is merely sufficient. His infinite Wisdom had devised a nobler plan. His infinite Mercy had provided for man's every need.

There are many ways in which we can show our love for our fellow-men, but there is one proof, the greatest of all, which even the most sceptical cannot gainsay; it is to die for another. Christ, who came to show by his human acts how great is the love of God for men, chose to give this supreme proof - to lay down his life for his friends. He gave his life "a redemption for many." (Matthew 20:28)

Suffering and death, but for sin, would never have afflicted mankind. These evils, the punishment of sin, were to play a central part in the all-wise plan of Redemption. Our Redeemer would use the very penalty of sin as the means by which to destroy it. Pain and sorrow would be sublimated by the pain and sorrow of Christ, and would become the means of man's perfection for all who unite them with his.

The need of man was for an all-sufficient sacrifice. Man needs to express by this external act his homage to God, his will to atone for sin, his thanksgiving for divine benefits, his petition for divine assistance. But how could sinful man offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable in the sight of God? What victim could he offer that would be worthy: of God's infinite majesty? Christ would offer an infinite sacrifice by his Passion and Death on the Cross.

For these reasons, then - and for others which Christian piety has discerned - Christ, who might have redeemed us with a prayer, willed to redeem us by his Passion and Death. Calvary is the throne of the King of Love, the school of Pain and Sorrow, the scene of the great Sacrifice. Freely laying down his life, our High Priest offered the all-sufficient sacrifice, and the Victim is none other than himself. Greater homage God himself could not demand, more worthy thanksgiving God could not receive, fuller atonement for sin, more prevailing petition could not be offered than the infinite Sacrifice of Calvary. By that Sacrifice our Redeemer blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was written against us, (Colossians 2:14) and merited once more for us all the grace that Adam had lost. By his death on Calvary he accomplished the Redemption; by his death he consummated the supreme act of his Eternal

Priesthood.

3

Christ, our Teacher, our Priest and Redeemer, is also our King. He is King by reason of his eternal Divinity; but he is King also as man. Assuming a human nature, the Word Incarnate received from the Godhead the royal dignity as the rightful attribute of his humanity. The angels are commanded to adore him, the winds and the sea obey him, every creature does him homage, because he is the Word Incarnate.

But he is King of men by a special title, for we are his subjects by right of conquest. Under the domination of Satan, reduced to the servitude of sin from that fatal moment in which Adam sinned, involving us all in his ruin, we have been freed by Christ from captivity, and we are now justly subject to his salutary rule. "As King," says Saint Augustine, "he fought for us, as Priest he offered himself for us. . . . He is our King, he is our Priest, in him let us rejoice."

The Kingship of Christ, spiritual in character, is exercised "by truth, by justice, and above all, by charity." By truth he subjects the minds of all men to himself, for all must believe by faith in his word. By justice he will punish in the world to come all those who have refused in this life to submit to his dominion. By charity, by love, by his grace, he draws all hearts to himself, bringing them "mightily and sweetly" (Wisdom 8:9) to union with God.

On Christ, therefore, Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King, all things converge. To him all creatures, and in a special way, all men are subject, and he, uniting in his own Person humanity - which is itself a compendium of all created perfection - with the divinity, as King and Priest offers all creatures to his Father. "All things," says Saint Paul, "are put under him . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:28)

4

There remains, finally, to be considered what is in many respects the most important of all the functions of Christ the Mediator. It consists in this, that he is the Head of his Mystical Body.

Christ has made full satisfaction for the sins of mankind; he has merited abundant grace for us all. But that atonement, that merit, that grace, is not ours - it is his. The atonement of Christ can become our atonement, his merits our merits, his grace our grace, only in so far as we become in some manner one with him. This principle of solidarity we have seen verified in the case of original sin. We did not commit original sin; yet because we receive our nature from Adam, in that sense being one with him, we inherit a sinful nature. It is in virtue of a similar solidarity with Christ, the second Adam, that mankind partakes of the fruits of the Redemption.

As Adam was in a sense the whole human race, being the fountain-head of our human nature, so Christ is mystically, though really, one with all who partake of his grace. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." (Corinthians 15:22) "As by the offence of one man, unto all men to condemnation, so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life." (Romans 5:18)

Christ having died for our sins, rose again for our justification. (Romans 4:25) Death has no longer any power over him; (Romans 6:9) he is the living, glorious Christ. It is the living, glorious Christ of whose "fulness we have all received"; (John 1:16) he is the Head, from whom the divine life of grace flows into all the members of his mystical body.

But of that mystical body we must treat apart in a special chapter.

The Mystical Body of Christ

1

It is not uncommon to give the name of "body" to a number of persons who are banded together under an authority for a particular purpose; and if, when we speak of Christians as a "body," we had in mind nothing more than the ordinary meaning of the term - namely, that of a properly organized society - then it would be scarcely necessary to insist especially upon the propriety of such an expression, since it may be applied with equal justice to any group, under whatever authority and for whatever purpose it may be formed.

But when Christians are called "the body of Christ," the term is used in a special sense, to indicate a unity far more intimate, far more real than that which it commonly designates. The bond that unites the members of any human society can never be other than external. Each member lives his own life, and the only sense in which he can be said to be one with his fellow-members is that, in common with them, he desires the same end and is subject to the same authority. The bond which unites the members of the mystical body of Christ is an internal, a vital bond; the members of Christ are one with Christ - and with each other - in the sense that each lives the same supernatural life of grace which he receives from the Head of the body, the living Christ. As in the body of man it is from the head, from the nerve-centres, that his vital activity is set in motion, so in the mystical body of Christ it is from the Head that every member receives that grace by which he lives the divine life.

This mystical union of the redeemed, of which Saint Paul so often speaks under the symbol of a body, is taught by Christ himself under a slightly different figure. He is the vine and we are the branches; "She that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) The essential meaning is the same; the member that is cut off from the rest of the body is dead, inactive; the branch that is cut off from the stem of the vine can bear no fruit because it can no longer receive the sap that gives it life. It is in this sense that Saint Paul speaks of

the faithful as being "grafted in Christ" as branches in an olive tree. (Romans 11:23)

The necessity of a real union with Christ, if we are to partake of his grace, becomes apparent also if we consider those passages of the teaching of Christ and his Apostles in which our reception of grace is described as "regeneration," as a new birth. It is by reason of our birth "in Adam" that we inherit original sin; it is by re-birth, regeneration in Christ, that we are to receive grace. And just as natural descent from Adam, or, if we may say so, "incorporation into Adam," is the indispensable condition of our receiving human nature with its dread heritage of sin, so incorporation into Christ is the necessary means whereby we may be re-born and made partakers of the divine nature.

2

It will be convenient here, before we proceed to study further the nature of Christ's mystical body, to examine more closely the life which animates it. Briefly, the life which we receive in virtue of our incorporation into Christ is none other than a participation in the life of God, which, in its inceptive state during our earthly pilgrimage, is sanctifying grace; in its perfect and consummated state, is the glory of the Beatific Vision.

We have had occasion already, in describing the original state of our first parents, to - explain that sanctifying (or habitual) grace is a spiritual quality ennobling the soul, elevating man's nature to a new order of being, making him the adoptive son of God and heir to eternal life. It has been said also that this grace is accompanied by other supernatural habits - the infused virtues - which perfect and elevate the natural faculties of man, enabling him to perform supernatural acts of virtue, proportionate to the reward which he is to merit. By the virtue of faith he is enabled to give a supernatural assent to the truths of God's revelation, by hope to place full confidence in the divine assistance, and by charity to love God as his sovereign good, to whom, as his supreme end, his whole life is to be directed. In addition to these "theological" virtues, the soul is endowed with infused moral virtues and other gifts perfecting it in the supernatural order.

Here I should like to insist upon two very important points. The first is that these gifts, although they perfect and bring about a real change in man's nature and faculties, do not destroy or replace them. It is an axiom, which should never be lost sight of, that "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it." Man must co-operate by his own acts in the work of his salvation. Raised by these gifts to the supernatural order, he remains in all the essentials of his nature unchanged. He lives a supernatural, a divine life; but he lives that life with his natural powers elevated by grace and the supernatural virtues. The act of faith, the act of love is supernatural, and meritorious of a supernatural reward; but that act of faith, that act of love is impossible without the natural act of intellect or of will which is, so to speak, its substratum. It would be a pernicious error to suppose that God's supernatural operation in the soul supersedes man's natural activities. Those natural powers, although of themselves they have no proportion with man's supernatural end, are nevertheless in themselves good, and, in spite of original sin, intrinsically unimpaired, and their exercise is necessary for salvation even as, on the other hand, is the assistance of God's grace.

The second point to which I would draw special attention is that, since man's end is a supernatural one, the whole work of man's salvation must begin and end with the grace of God. If he had been left in his purely natural state, it is clear that, given his natural faculties, given God's providential cooperation - without which no creature can exist or act - man would have been able by the use of those powers, without any further special aid from God, to achieve his salvation. But, since his end is one which surpasses his natural powers, therefore his motion towards that end must have its first impulse from the supernatural grace of God. Hence the first thought, the first aspiration of the will towards God in the supernatural order, must be the effect of grace.

In addition, therefore, to the permanent gifts already described, man needs to receive from God a supernatural illumination of the mind, a supernatural inspiration of the will, in order that he may freely turn to God, the source of his sanctification. This transient enlightenment and inspiration is called actual grace. But here, too, is verified the same principle of co-operation. Invited by God to

become his adoptive son, man can refuse to answer the call; urged to repentance, he can oppose to grace the resistance of his will.

Man's salvation, then, is in his own hands, and yet it is completely in the hands of God. Eternally God has prepared the gifts of grace that will call all men to himself, that will assist them in times of stress and temptation; for all he has prepared the grace and the virtues by which they may merit their supernatural reward. Some will answer the call, others will reject it. Those who have answered, by God's grace, truly merit their reward; but they owe it to God, who has called them that they might hear. Not only the call, but also man's answer to the call, is God's gift; man has nothing that he has not received from God's bounty; his very merits are the gift of God. And what of those who reject the call? Their failure is their own, in that, when they might, had they so willed, have corresponded with grace, they refused to do their part. In this free consent of the just to God's grace, in this wilful rejection of God's call on the part of the impious, lies the mystery of Predestination. While leaving to its proper place a full treatment of this subject, let me say only this: man's malice is but too apparent; of God's abundant mercy we have had ample proof. The mystery, therefore, may bewilder, but it cannot appal us.

The life of grace - in this not unlike the natural life of man - becomes intensified by the activity of him who lives it. By good works done in the state of grace the members of the mystical body of Christ increase that grace within themselves, becoming more and more closely united with God by charity, partaking more and more fully of the divine life. But if this be the effect of good works, what will be the effect of mortal sin? By that dread act the son of God rebels against his Father; he sets his heart upon a creature in the place of God. By sin he loses the virtue of charity, and with charity are lost grace and the other supernatural virtues which depend upon charity for their being. There remain only - unless the unhappy sinner has rejected his belief in God's word or his trust in God's mercy - the two virtues of faith and hope, two slender strands which still hold him to the body of Christ, of which, however, now he is but a withered member. Although still able by his natural powers to do some good works, yet he cannot by these merit eternal life, for he has lost sanctifying grace, which gave his works their

supernatural value.

This being the effect of mortal sin, it is clear that the forgiveness of sins, or justification, involves a real change in the soul. When God forgives sin he does more than merely overlook man's past offences; he gives him life once more. Moving him by actual grace to repentance of his sin, he enriches his soul again with sanctifying grace and the virtues, reinstating him in his dignity as the son of God, generously restoring to him every gift that he had lost.

* * *

The life of the body of Christ is sanctifying grace together with the supernatural gifts which accompany it; the head of the body is Christ, from whom that life is communicated to all its members. But a living body has a soul, and the soul of the mystical body is none other than the Holy Ghost. It is through the Holy Spirit that the charity of God is poured out in our hearts; it is because we possess the Spirit of his Son that we are able to call God our Father; it is through the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we are made in the likeness of the Son. Dwelling in the souls of each of the just, the Holy Ghost pervades with his life-giving presence the whole of the mystical body. He is the Spirit of life, (Romans 8:2) and the Church proclaims her belief in this truth daily as she recites the Creed: "I believe. . . in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life."

3

Saint Paul, in speaking of the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, uses a very significant expression. He says that it is "the fulness" of Christ. (Ephesians 2:22-23) The mystical Christ, then, is the complement, the prolongation of the physical Christ, of the Word Incarnate. To the physical Christ nothing can be added, but the mystical Christ is in a state of growth, of gradual development. It is to grow until it has reached "the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) And, just as the physical body grows by its own life and activity, so the mystical body of Christ will develop through the works of its members performed under the vital influence of Christ the Head.

The merits, the satisfaction of Christ are super-abundant, and to

them nothing is wanting. And yet something is lacking to the accomplishment of the Redemption. There is lacking the appropriation by each member of the human race of the merits which Christ has gained for all. Incorporated into Christ, living his life, as he lives the life of the Father, we make those merits our own. They are his merits and they are ours - ours because we are one with him from whom we receive our supernatural life. Our works are meritorious and have satisfactory value, but that merit, that satisfaction adds nothing to the merits and atonement of Christ; for the life of the member is not distinct from the life of the head. In this sense, then, we "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," (Colossians 1:24) that by becoming members of his body we make his life our own, and by our good works multiply our merits and intensify in ourselves the life of grace.

But it is not only ourselves that we perfect by our good works. Precisely because we are not isolated units but members of a body, our actions have their repercussion upon the other members of that body. Each member of the body of Christ takes his part in circulating the divine life among the other members. We are able to help one another by our prayers and merits. In this manner we can assist one another on earth, the saints in heaven - and particularly the blessed Mother of God - can assist us, and both the saints and we are able to help the souls in purgatory. Not only are we members of Christ, but, in the words of Saint Paul, we are "members one of another." (Romans 12:5) This intercommunication of prayers and merits is known as "the communion of saints," and it is upon this doctrine that rests the Catholic practice of praying to the angels and saints, and of interceding for the souls of the faithful dead.

After these general considerations concerning the mystical body of Christ it remains now to study the Church more particularly in her various stages.

The Church on Earth

Since the Church on earth is the "fulness of Christ," the prolongation on earth of the Word Incarnate, we should expect to find verified in her that combination of the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible, which is the proper note of the Incarnation. It is peculiar to the mixed nature of man that he perceives the things of the intellect through the medium of the senses, the things of the spirit through things material, the invisible things of God through the things that are made. Hence God in his loving wisdom sent his Son in human flesh, that through him we might be brought to the knowledge and love of the invisible God. This incarnational or sacramental dispensation he has willed to continue to the end of time, and it is in the Church of Christ that it is embodied.

As it is of the essence of man to be body and soul, as in Christ the visible human nature and the invisible Divinity were personally and indissolubly united, so in the Church of Christ there is the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. It is of the essence of the Church that her members live by the invisible, divine life of grace. It is equally essential to her that her members are visibly united by external bonds, subject to the same visible authority. The same conclusion - that the Church is essentially visible and invisible - follows from the general considerations that we have made concerning the mystical body of Christ. We are not isolated in the work of our salvation; our redemption is social and organic in character. If we, human beings, are united with Christ and - with each other in receiving the fruits of the redemption, then we form a visible society; for it is natural to men to be grouped together by visible means, to be governed by a visible authority. God deals with men according to their nature; and a society among men is naturally visible and external.

What we might have been led to expect is actually the case. Christ willed that his mystical body on earth should be a visible society, governed by a visible head, its members united by visible links of communion. He, the invisible Head, would be represented on earth by a visible head, Peter - and his successors - whom he himself appointed. Subject to the head, but divinely appointed too, and

endowed with real authority over the members of his body, are the Apostles - and their successors, the hierarchy of bishops, pastors of the flock of Christ. As he had been sent by the Father, so he sent these to continue the work of salvation - nay, to continue on earth his very self, for to hear them is to hear him, to despise them is to despise him. Hence the inevitable - and vital - consequence: to be a member of that living organism which we have described, to belong to the mystical body of Christ, is nothing else than to be a member of the visible Church on earth which Christ has founded. As it is impossible for the branch to live which is not united to the stem, so outside the body of Christ, outside the Church which he has founded, there can be no salvation. (To some that Church has not been made known, to others she has been made known, but inculpably they have not recognised her for what she is. In their case we may be sure that God will take count of their good faith, of their sincere desire to please God, and will make it so that they are invisibly united to the life-giving Head. He will take the will for the deed, and those who are in inculpable error will be united "by desire," though not in fact, to the visible Church of Christ.)

That the Church of Christ is One none can doubt who has understood the organic nature of the body of Christ. It is as essential to the Church to be one as it is essential to her to be the body of Christ. But since she is visible, that unity is not only a unity of life - which is invisible - but a visible unity consisting in subjection to the same visible authority, in a common faith in the teaching of that visible Church, in a common worship, manifested in the use of the same external rites instituted by Christ.

The Church, because she is the body of Christ, is Holy; holy because she lives by the divine life which she receives from her Head; holy because union with Christ and with God is the essence of her being; holy because outside her there is no holiness.

Because all who are members of Christ's body are the children of God, because all are one in Christ, so that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free," (Galatians 3:26-28) therefore the Church is Catholic or Universal, with the mission to teach all nations, to preach the Gospel to every creature.

"Built upon the foundation of the Apostles," (Ephesians 2:20)

fulfilling the mission entrusted to the Apostles, her members recognising as their head the Pope, the successor of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, the Church is Apostolic.

The Church which, by reason of the twofold element in her - the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible - continues the person of the God-man, continues also the work of the Redeemer. The Church fulfils the functions of Christ as Teacher Priest, Head, and King.

1

The revelation brought to man by Jesus Christ is definitive. "Last of all he hath spoken to us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:2) To the truths taught by Christ nothing new is to be added. It is the office of the Church, therefore, in fulfilling Christ's function as teacher, not to make new revelations, but to guard from error the deposit of faith, and authentically, authoritatively to proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

The teaching authority of a visible society resides, not in its individual members, but in its visible head. The subject of that authority, therefore, is first the visible head of the Church, the Pope, and secondly the hierarchy of bishops under that head and considered as forming one with him. The teaching of the Church is to be accepted by her members, not as a matter for discussion, but as the Word of God himself; for through that living voice it is Christ himself who speaks. To the insistent questionings of man: Whence do I come; what is my nature; whither do I go? the Church returns unhesitating and infallible answer. Of the law of God, concerning which man is so often in doubt, the Church is the authentic interpreter, the unequivocal teacher. It is as necessary that she should be infallible in her teaching as it is impossible that Christ himself, the Word of God, should err; for the Church is none other than Christ the Prophet, living and teaching in his mystical body.

2

The sacrifice of Calvary, by which Christ our Priest consummated the work of the Redemption, is all-sufficient, and no further sacrifice can be needed. Is the religion of Christ, then - alone of all religions - to have no external rite, whereby its adherents may daily express to God their worship and their thanksgiving? Are the members of Christ to be content with the mere memory of a sacrifice that was offered long ago? The loving Wisdom of God has provided also for this need. No other sacrifice can be pleasing in God's sight, when our High Priest has offered himself, the immaculate Victim. Then that same Sacrifice will be continued to the end of time. The Church, the mystical body of Christ, continues the function of his eternal Priesthood.

The night before he suffered, our Redeemer, as he sat at table with his Apostles, took bread and broke it, saying: "This is my Body"; and then, taking wine, he said: "This is my Blood. . . . Do this in commemoration of me." By virtue of the words of Christ, the bread, though to all appearances still bread, was not bread but his Sacred Body; the wine, though to the senses it appeared to be wine, was his most Precious Blood. In this manner Christ instituted the Sacrifice of the New Law, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine, are offered to God for the remission of sins. It is more than a mere commemoration of the sacrifice of Calvary; it is that sacrifice itself. The Victim is none other than Christ, really, though sacramentally, present. The Priest is Christ, though he offers now in his mystical body, through the ministry of his priests, who from him have the power to work the eucharistic miracle. The Sacrifice of the Mass differs from that of Calvary solely in the manner of offering.

Daily, therefore, ascend to God the infinite honour and thanksgiving that are due to him; daily to each of the members of the mystical body, who with Christ and in Christ offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, are applied the fruits of the Redemption, the inexhaustible merits and atonement of Christ our Saviour. As the sacrifice of Calvary was the supreme act of the life of Christ on earth, so the Mass is the supreme act of worship in the Church. In the Eucharist, where our Redeemer is really present under the sacramental veils, the whole life of Christians must ever be centred.

In the sacrifice of Calvary is the whole efficacy of the Redemption. Hence it is around the Eucharistic Sacrifice that we must group all those external rites which Christ has instituted as the means of our sanctification.

3

Fulfilling on earth the function of Christ the Teacher and of Christ the Priest, the Church fulfils also his function of life-giving Head by the administration of the Sacraments. God might, had he so willed, have distributed invisibly the grace which Christ had merited for mankind; he might have decreed to bestow the fruits of the Redemption directly and immediately in answer to man's prayer. But it was in keeping with the nature of man, with the incarnational dispensation of which we have spoken, that the invisible grace of God in the soul should be signified - and produced - by visible, external rites. These external rites, seven in number, instituted by Christ to signify and to produce grace, are the Sacraments. God the Son, as we have seen, used his humanity, personally united with him, as the instrument of grace. The Sacraments are the instruments which Christ himself, through human ministry, uses to communicate the divine life to the members of his mystical body.

Most noble among them all is the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains Christ himself, the author of grace. Really present as the Victim of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, he invites all men to partake of the Victim. To eat the Body of Christ, to drink his Blood under the sacramental species - this is the principal means of our incorporation into Christ. "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (John 6:58) We are solemnly warned that unless we partake of this sacrament, we shall not have life in us. (John 6:54) As all grace flows from Christ the Head, as it is by the sacrifice of Calvary that we are redeemed, so does the efficacy of all the Sacraments depend upon their essential relation to the Eucharist, in which is Christ the source of all sanctification. "From this sacrament as from a fountain is derived the goodness and the perfection of all the other sacraments."

But before we can eat of the food of life we must be born, before we can be nourished with the food of the strong we must be strengthened. Washed in the waters of *Baptism* we are cleansed from

original sin and, dying to the old Adam, are re-born to the new, incorporated already into the mystical body of Christ by the rite of regeneration, which destines us to eat of the living bread. Anointed with the oil of *Confirmation* we are strengthened in faith, that we may remain in the unity of Christ's mystical body, resisting the wiles of Satan who seeks to destroy the young life that is in us. But such is human weakness that even though we have been nourished with the heavenly food of the *Eucharist*, we may yet fall away and offend God grievously. For this calamity Christ has provided a remedy in the Sacrament of *Penance*. He has given to his priests the power to forgive sin. Humble and contrite confession, with the will on our part to make satisfaction, together with the sacramental absolution of the priest - these are the elements of the sacrament by which Christ restores the life that we have lost. The contract of *Matrimony*, blessed already by God in the very beginning, is now raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, giving grace to those who are to be parents of more members of Christ's body. So holy is this union that it is compared by Saint Paul to the union between Christ and his Church. When death is imminent, and our powers are weakened by disease, the grace of God is at hand in the Sacrament of *Extreme Unction*, to destroy the relics of sin that remain in us, to strengthen us against the final efforts of Satan, and to prepare us to receive the Viaticum for our final journey to God. More evidently connected with the Eucharist and with the Priesthood of Christ is the Sacrament of *Holy Orders*, by which Christ has provided for the continuation in some chosen men of the power of his Priesthood. At their word the bread and the wine become the Body and Blood of Christ; by their power the bonds of sin are loosed or retained in the members of his mystical body. To the bishops the priesthood is given in its fulness, that, subject to the successor of Saint Peter, they may rule the flock of Christ and, by communicating to others the powers of the priesthood, provide unfailing succession of ministers in the Church of God.

These are the means by which Christ, the invisible Head, communicates his life to his visible members. Man is sanctified by the means most adapted to his nature. A material thing, a visible rite, is used by Christ to produce in man a spiritual, invisible effect, and the visible Church lives by the invisible life of God.

The Church, then, is the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Here Christ reigns visibly as King over the minds of men; to subject one's mind to the Church by faith is to acknowledge the reign of Christ, King of Truth. Here, too, the King of Love rules the hearts of men by the grace which, by visible means and through his human ministers, he communicates to all the members of his body. The Pope, the head of the Church, exercising his boundless spiritual jurisdiction over all the faithful, is the earthly representative of Christ the King.

To the King of Truth and of Love many have not submitted, perhaps will never submit. But over these also Christ must reign, for no man can withdraw himself from his universal dominion. Those who resist the attractions of his grace will not escape the punishment of his justice, when the day comes in which he will offer all things to his Father. It is time now to consider the Kingdom of Christ in its consummation.

Consummation

Restored by the grace of Christ to the condition of sons of God, we remain none the less subject to those ills which are the penalty of original sin. The sting of concupiscence reminds us that, sons of God though we be, we are still the children of Adam. Pain and suffering are our daily lot in this life, though we are destined to a joy of which no man can tell. And before that joy can be ours ail must suffer the penalty of death.

But while our Redeemer has not freed us from these evils, yet he has transformed them. The rebellion of the senses has no terrors for the Christian who is strong in the grace of Christ; for in overcoming temptation by the help of God, which is never lacking, he wins a more glorious crown. Suffering and death, since Christ has suffered and died, have taken on a new meaning. Uniting his suffering and his death with the Passion and Death of Christ; the Christian appropriates the atonement of the Saviour and - becomes more and more formed to his likeness; like Saint Paul, he glories in his tribulations for Christ's body, which is the Church.

At length, then, the body, worn out with age or disease, is unable any longer to cooperate with the soul in its vital functions; and the immortal soul departs from it, leaving it to crumble in the dust. The time of trial, the time during which, by struggling with temptation and corresponding with God's grace, we may store up merit of eternal life, finishes with death. "The tree. . . in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Eccles 11:3) At the moment of dissolution man has already made his final and irrevocable decision; after death there is no repentance. He has chosen as his sovereign good either God or the creature. If the former, then he is in the state of grace, and he has merited his eternal reward. If the latter, then he is in the state of sin, supernaturally dead, and he can have no part in the inheritance of the sons of God. In that moment the disembodied soul is judged; its eternal doom is pronounced.

Upon the unhappy fate of the lost soul there is little need to dwell. The heart falters at the thought of the immortal soul, made for God and unable to find contentment save in him, doomed to live for all

eternity and to yearn for God with a gnawing hunger that can never be appeased. Then at length the emptiness of creatures becomes apparent, when the soul, cut off from God for ever, turns for solace to them and to itself, only to be cast back, still unsatisfied, upon the God whose countenance is eternally withdrawn. In the creatures where man had expected to find satisfaction he will find only his torment, and especially the torment of an ever-consuming, yet never-destroying fire. Hitherto we have contemplated the infinite love and mercy of God. Of his justice, let it suffice to say that it is infinite too; and we adore it in that dread sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matthew 25:41)

We turn willingly to consider the lot of those who die in peace with God. Among these will be some who in God's sight are entirely guiltless, or, if they offended him, have completely atoned. There is nothing to delay their eternal reward. Others there will be who, by reason of venial sins, or of atonement due to mortal sins whose guilt has been forgiven, have yet to make full satisfaction to God's justice. These souls must undergo after death a period of suffering in purgatory, until the last relics of sin have been removed which keep them from their Father's loving embrace.

Of the reward of the blessed one would be happy to write. But if Saint Paul, who was rapt to the third heaven, tells us that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for them that love him," (1 Corinthians 2:9; cf. Isaiah 64:4) then it were folly for the writer to attempt to describe it. We must be content with what little God has revealed. In heaven the life of grace blossoms into the life of glory. Each soul, in proportion to its merits, receives a new supernatural gift - the light of glory - adapting and strengthening it for the vision of God. And then at last they look upon God's face. It is no longer a feeble image of God that the human mind conceives; it is God who immediately and directly shows himself to the soul. "We shall see him as he is." Faith has given way to vision, darkness to the brilliance of the mid-day sun; and the mind is not dazzled, but illumined, by the brightness. The life of God in the Trinity of Persons is no longer a mystery, for in that life the blessed have, and now fully enjoy, their share. The sons of God have entered into their inheritance.

The human mind, in its search after truth, has now reached its goal, for it sees all truth in Truth itself. Man's will has ceased to desire the Good, for he is in complete and eternal possession of the Supreme Good, apart from whom nothing can be desired. For him now, as for God eternally, to will is not to desire, but to love, and in that love to find his eternal delight. Faith and hope are no more; there remains only charity, the greatest of all. As God infinitely surpasses the creature, so does the joy of heaven infinitely surpass the most exquisite joy of earth. The happiness of the blessed is none other than the happiness of God; for, in what else is God happy than in the eternal contemplation of his infinite Self?

* * *

This visible world will have an end. The moment appointed by God will come in which the earth and the heavens will be destroyed, and all men who are then living will pass through the gates of death to immortality. The heavens and the earth will be renewed, and then the Saviour will make all men sharers in his triumph over death. The bodies of all who have died, from Adam to the last child who is born, will rise again from the dust to partake of the eternal lot of the soul. The body that has been the soul's partner in sin will rise again to share in its everlasting torment. The body that has worked with the soul for sanctification will rise to share in its glory. The glorious body, perfectly subject to the soul in all its actions, will now no longer suffer pain; completely subject to the commands of the spirit, it will annihilate space by the agility of its movements; and if, even on earth, the happiness of the soul can transform even the most homely human countenance, then the glorious body will shine with light and be resplendent with a supernatural beauty, as it reflects the perfect bliss of the soul.

Then the Son of Man will come "with much power and majesty." (Matthew 24:30) The triumphant Redeemer will come at last to judge all mankind. The doom that has been pronounced upon each at the moment of death will then be publicly proclaimed, and, in the gathering of all mankind before the judgement- seat of Christ, the love, the mercy, and the justice of God will receive solemn vindication. Then all who have wilfully rejected the grace of the Redeemer will be cut off for ever from his body, and Christ will

present the "glorious Church, not, having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish," (Ephesians 5:27) to his Eternal Father.

* * *

I began this account with the names of the Father, the Son; and the Holy Ghost, the Three who are ineffably One.

Man's life is a search after unity. His mind is not content until he has reduced to an harmonious unity the multiple phenomena of experience. That unity he will find, but only in God, the first Cause of all. Men have dreamed of unity among themselves. They have lamented the discord of wills which sets man against man, family against family, nation against nation. The unity which will combine all men into one great family is also to be achieved; but only in God. Sin is the origin of discord; the bond of perfection is charity. The unity which mankind is destined to achieve is none other than that which unites the three Persons of the Godhead - the unity of one divine life in which all men share under Christ the Head of his body. That this unity may be consummated is the last prayer of Christ to his Eternal Father:

"All my things are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am not in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in my name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one as we also are. . . . And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me. "That they may be one, as thou Father in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one as we also are one; I in thee and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:10-16)

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *An Outline of Catholic Thinking* by Father George D Smith, Ph.D., D.D. It has an introduction by Cardinal Willam O'Connell, Archbishop of Boston. The edition used was published by The MacMillan Company of New York, New York in 1928.

It has the Nihil Obstat of Father Arthur J Scanlan, S.T.D., Censor Librorum, and the Imprimatur of Cardinal Patrick Hayes, Archbishop, New York, New York, 22 December 1927.

The cover image is the 16th century oil painting *Christ Giving the Blessing* by the circle of Joos van Cleve. The image was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

For more free ebooks, material by or about thousands of saints, beati, venerables, servants of God, devotions, or the history of the Church, come see us at -

CatholicSaints.Info

** or **

CatholicSaints.Mobi